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SUBJECT: PARIS PACT ROUNDTABLE ON IRAN

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11. Summary. The second roundtable convened by the "Paris Pact" for countries affected by the Afghanistan Opium Economy was held at the headquarters of the World Customs Organization in Brussels on October 15. This meeting was a considerable improvement over the first roundtable on the Balkans held in September for two reasons: the focus on a single country rather than a region, and the presence of a knowledgeable Iranian who contributed greatly to the discussion. The primary task of the upcoming Consultative Group meeting in Rome on November 21 must be to decide whether the level of specificity (or generality) of the recommendations produced by these first two roundtables meets the original objectives of the Paris Pact. It is unlikely that future roundtables will ever produce more specific recommendations, nor will potential donors use these meetings to sign up for funding identified assistance gaps. One of the outcomes of the Iran roundtable was the unprecedented invitation to send a mission of international experts to Iran to evaluate its anti-drug efforts and the opportunities for regional cooperation in combating drug trafficking. The meeting may also eventually lead to the posting of western DLO's in Teheran. While not among the original objectives of the Paris Pact, this is certainly a happy outcome and perhaps justifies giving the Paris Pact further opportunities to prove its value. End Summary.

12. The second roundtable convened by the "Paris Pact" for countries affected by the Afghanistan Opium Economy was held at the headquarters of the World Customs Organization in Brussels on October 15. The U.S. delegation to the meeting included USEU/NAS Frank Kerber, DEA/Brussels James C. Kabel, and DEA/Istanbul Jim Allen. About 30 persons attended the five-hour meeting which was again chaired by Bernard Frahi, Chief of the Partnership in Development Branch, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna. Delegations included the European Customs Organization, World Customs Organization (WCO), the EU Directorate for External Relations, and national delegations from Iran, Greece, Turkey, France, UK, Italy, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Ireland. (Comment. Interpol, which had attended the Balkans Route Roundtable in October, was absent. Significantly, Europol has not attended either meeting. End comment.)

Overview of the Problem

13. The meeting began with the UNODC's overview of the problem: the primary entry and exit routes into and out of Iran, data on drug seizures, and Iranian efforts to staunch the drug flows. This was followed by a brief presentation by the Iranian representative, Police Colonel Mazoud Rezvani, Drug Liaison Officer (DLO) to Pakistan resident in Islamabad. Rezvani confirmed the drug routes outlined by the UNODC. He said the southern sea route through the Gulf States had been discussed at a recent meeting he had with the Pakistani Coast Guard. Iranian efforts to staunch the drug flows include construction of 212 border posts, 205 watch towers, 22 concrete barriers, 290 km of canals, and the forced evacuation of Iranian villages used by drug traffickers on the Afghan border. The greatest seizures within Iran have been opium and hashish. Drug seizures of heroin, morphine, opium, and hashish have been greater in the first six months of 2003 than in all of 2002. There are 1.8 million drug addicts in Iran. Morphine only transits the country, while opium and heroin are consumed by the population. Harald Frohlich, head of the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (WCO and ZKA), said that seizure reports coming out of Iran do not give a clear and reliable picture. There is a clear lack of national and regional coordination and a regional intelligence strategy. Iran has invested one billion dollars to control the drug routes through its territory. Customs departments focus on the legal trade routes, not the illegal routes used by traffickers. Rezvani countered that the national drug intelligence unit in Teheran, which brings together officers from the Ministries of Health, Education, Interior, Intelligence, the judiciary and police, coordinates Iranian anti-drug efforts. This anti-narcotics center maintains regular contact with Turkey, the Gulf States and Pakistan. Joint training programs with Pakistan have been sponsored by the UNODC. The UNODC summarized this overview

with the following points:

- Drug entry routes into Iran from Afghanistan are through poor and remote areas of the country.
- Internal checkpoints within Iran are producing seizure results.
- A currently minor exit route through Iraq deserves attention now as instability there could allow this route to flourish.
- There are clearly gaps in reporting and coordination.
- Need for Customs in Iran to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate trade.

Review of Multilateral and Bilateral Assistance

14. The next agenda item was a review of current multilateral and bilateral anti-trafficking assistance to Iran. The UNODC CIRUS Project (Combined Interdiction Unified Strategy) with a total budget of Euro 8.5 million is one of the largest UNODC anti-trafficking projects in the region. Most of the funds are used for equipment, including vehicles, night vision devices, heavy-duty construction equipment for border fortifications, narcotics and chemical drug precursor testing kits, drug detection equipment, and radio communication equipment. Smaller bilateral assistance efforts are being funded by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. The EU assistance has been targeting at demand reduction and institution building. The EU assisted in setting up the Drug Intelligence Unit in Teheran. Drugs are a high priority in the EU-Iran cooperation agreement currently being developed. The UNODC's assessment is that assistance is needed to control sea traffic to the Gulf States (particularly the ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas), on the northern Iraq border, and on the borders with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Reznavi countered that Iranian resources are primarily directed at staunching the drugs flows into Iran along the Afghan and Pakistan borders where drug seizures have been the greatest and not on the exit routes. This policy is unlikely to change, given limited Iranian resources for this effort. The UK mentioned its long-term interest in posting a Customs/DLO (drugs liaison officer) in Teheran. USDEL agreed that DLO's from donor countries stationed in Teheran would greatly assist the coordination effort and produce more reliable intelligence on the drug trafficking through the country. While not responding to the call for DLO postings in Teheran, Reznavi responded that Iran, Pakistan and the Gulf States were meeting December 8-9 in Islamabad to review anti-drug cooperation and repeatedly invited the Paris Pact to come to Iran to assess its efforts first-hand. Delegations welcomed a report on the December Islamabad meeting.

Next Steps

15. The chair noted that the results of the two roundtables on the Balkans and Iran would be presented to the Paris Pact Consultative Group meeting in Rome on November 21. He invited the delegations to submit suggestions on the agenda as well as attendees. The next roundtable would be on western Russia and would be held in Moscow during the first quarter of 2004. Future roundtables could focus on such areas as Central Asia, the Caucasus, Pakistan, the Gulf States, Albania, or Montenegro. Whenever possible, future roundtables will be held in the region, rather than in Brussels.

16. Frahi closed the meeting by noting that the purpose of the Paris Pact was to identify assistance gaps in combating drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Europe. The two roundtables held to date had identified gaps, but it was unclear whether the intended level of specificity was attained. Further, donors had not been identified to fill the gaps. He appealed to the delegations to send both experts and policy-makers to the next roundtable to ensure that both gaps and funding are addressed.

17. Comment. This meeting was a considerable improvement over the first roundtable on the Balkans held in September for two reasons: the focus on a single country rather than a region, and the presence of a knowledgeable Iranian who contributed greatly to the discussion. DEA agents on the delegation also found the meeting interesting and informative since they do not have a presence in Iran and must rely on third-country reporting. If nothing else, the Paris Pact provided a multilateral forum to deal with the Iranians on an issue on which we agree, but at a politically-charged time in our bilateral relationship. Perhaps we should suggest future roundtables be held on other countries who might similarly feel more comfortable dealing with us in a multilateral setting. The next roundtable on western Russia in Moscow gives us the opportunity to field an experienced delegation for a straightforward discussion with Russian drug policy makers. The Iran roundtable clearly demonstrates the value of closer coordination among our like-minded partners in the

Paris Pact before the meetings and better communication and direction for UNODC, which appears desperate for guidance.

18. The primary task of the upcoming Consultative Group meeting in Rome must be to decide whether the level of specificity (or generality) of the recommendations produced by these first two roundtables meets the original objectives of the Paris Pact. It is unlikely that future roundtables will ever produce more specific recommendations, nor will potential donors use these meetings to sign up for funding identified assistance gaps. One of the outcomes of the Iran roundtable was the unprecedented invitation to send a mission of international experts to Iran to evaluate its anti-drug efforts and the opportunities for regional cooperation in combating drug trafficking. This mission may also eventually lead to the posting of western DLO's in Teheran. While not among the original objectives of the Paris Pact, this is certainly a happy outcome and perhaps justifies giving the Paris Pact further opportunities to prove its value. End comment.

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